

CHEAP REPOSITORY. ^{4418.2}
SUNDAY READING. ¹⁵
THE
GRAND ASSIZES;
OR
General Goal Delivery.



Sold by J. MARSHALL,
(Printer to the CHEAP REPOSITORY for Moral
and Religious Tracts) No. 17, Queen-Street,
Cheapside, and No. 4, Aldermay Church Yard;
LONDON.

By S. HAZARD, at Bath, and by all Booksellers,
Newsmen, and Hawkers in Town and Country.
—Great Allowance will be made to Shopkeepers
and Hawkers.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Or 4s. 6d. per 100.—2s. 6d. for 50.—1s. 6d. for 25.

A Cheaper Edition for Hawkers.

[Entered at Stationers Hall.]

SECRET-REF ID: A66087

2000-01-01

WILLIAM D. HARRIS

James C. Smith



T H E

GRAND ASSIZES, &c.

THERE was in a certain country a great King, who was also a Judge. He was very merciful, but he was also very just; for he used to say, that justice was the foundation of all goodness. His subjects were apt enough, in a general way, to extol his merciful temper, and especially those subjects who were always committing crimes which made them liable to be punished by his justice. This last quality they constantly kept out of sight, till they had cheated themselves into a notion that he was too good to punish at all.

Now it had happened a long time before, that this whole people had broken their allegiance, and had forfeited the King's favor, and had also fallen from a very prosperous state in which he had placed them, having one and all become bankrupts; but when they were over head and ears in debt, and had nothing to pay, the King's son most generously took the whole burthen of their debts on himself; and, in short, it was proposed that all their affairs should be settled, and their very crimes forgiven, (for they were criminals as well as debtors) provided only they would shew themselves, to be sorry for what they had done themselves, and be thankful for what was done for them. I should however remark, that a book was also given them, in which a true and faithful account of their own rebellion was written; and of the manner of obtaining the King's pardon, together with a variety of directions for their conduct in the time to come; and in this book it was particularly mentioned, that after having lived a certain number of years in a part of the same King's country, and under his eye and jurisdiction, there should be a Grand Assizes, when every one was to be publicly tried for his past behaviour, and after this trial was over, certain heavy punishments were to be inflicted on those who should have still persisted in their rebellion, and certain high premiums were to be bestowed as a gracious reward upon the obedient.

It may be proper here to notice, that this King's Court differed in some respects from our Courts of Justice, being indeed a sort of Court of Appeal,

to which questions were carried after they had been imperfectly decided in the Common Courts. And although with us all criminals are tried, (and very properly in my opinion) by a Jury of their Peers; yet in this King's country the mode was very different; for since every one of the people had been in a certain sense criminals, the King did not think it fair to make them judges also. It would, indeed, have been impossible to follow in all respects the customs which prevail with us, for the crimes with which men are charged in our Courts are mere "overt acts," as the Lawyers call them, that is, acts which regard the outward behavior; such as the acts of striking, maiming, stealing, and so forth. But in the King's Court it was not merely outward sins, but sins of the heart also which were to be punished. Many a crime therefore, which was never heard of in the Court of King's-bench, or at the Old Baily, was here to be brought to light; and was reserved for this great day. Among these were Pride, and Oppression, and Envy, and Malice, and Revenge, and Covetousness, and secret Vanity of Mind, and Evil Thoughts of all sorts, and all evil Wishes and Desires. When Covetousness, indeed, put men on committing Robbery, or when Malice drove them to an act of Murder, then the common Courts immediately judged the criminal, without waiting for these Great Assizes; nevertheless, since even a Thief and Murderer would now and then escape in the common Courts, for want of evidence, or through some fault or other of the Judge or Jury, the escape was of little moment to the poor criminal, for he was sure to be tried again

by this great King; and even though the man should have been punished in some sense before, yet he had now a farther punishment to fear, unless, indeed he was one of those, who had obtained (by the means I before spoke of) this great King's pardon. The sins of the heart, however, were by far the most numerous sort of sins, which were to come before this great Tribunal; and these were to be judged by this great King in person, and by none but himself; because he possessed a certain power of getting at all secrets.

I once heard of a certain King of Sicily, who built a whispering gallery in the form of an ear, through which he could hear every word his rebellious subjects uttered, though spoken ever so low. But this secret of the King of Sicily was nothing to what this great King possessed; for he He had the power of knowing every thought which was conceived in the mind, though it never broke out into words, or proceeded to actions.

Now you may be ready to think, perhaps, that these people were worse off than any others, because they were to be examined so closely, and judged so strictly. Far from it: the King was too just to expect bricks without giving them straw; he gave them, therefore, every help that they needed. He gave them a book of directions, as I before observed; and because they were naturally short-sighted, he supplied them with a glass for reading it, and thus the most dim-sighted might see, if they did not wilfully shut their eyes; but though the

the King *invited* them to open their eyes, he did not *compel* them; and many remained stone blind all their lives with the book in their hand, because they would not use the glass, nor take the proper means for reading and understanding all that was written for them. The humble and sincere learnt in time to see even that part of the book which was least plainly written; and it was observed that the ability to understand it depended more on the heart than the head; an evil disposition blinded the sight, while humility operated like an eye-salve.

Now it happened that those who had been so lucky as to escape the punishment of the lower Courts, took it into their heads that they were all very good sort of people, and of course very safe from any danger at this *Great Assize*. This grand intended trial, indeed, had been talked of so much and put off so long, (for it had seemed long at least to these short-sighted people) that many persuaded themselves it would never take place at all; and far the greater part were living away therefore without ever thinking about it; they went on just as if nothing at all had been done for their benefit; and as if they had no King to please, no King's son to be thankful to, no book to guide themselves by, and as if the Assizes were never to come about.

But with this King "a thousand years were as one day, for he was not slack concerning his promises, as some men count slackness." So at length the solemn period approached. Still, however, the people did not prepare for the solemnity, or rather,

rather, they prepared for it much as some of the people in our towns are apt to prepare for the Assize times; I mean by balls and feastings, and they saw their own trial come on, with as little concern as is felt by the people in our streets, when they see the Judge's procession enter the town, who indeed comfort themselves that it is only those in the prisons who are guilty.

But when at last the day came, and every man found that he was to be judged for himself, and that some how or other, all his secrets were brought out, and that there was now no escape, things began to take a more serious turn. Some of the worst of the criminals were got together debating in an outer Court of the Grand Hall, and there they passed their time, not in compunction with tears, not in comparing their lives with what was required in that book which had been given them, but in comparing themselves with such as had been still more notorious offenders.

One who had grown wealthy by rapine and oppression, but had contrived to keep within the letter of the law, insulted a poor fellow as a thief, because he had stolen a loaf of bread. "You were far wickeder than I was, said a Citizen to his Apprentice, for you drank and swore at the ale-house every Sunday night." "Yes," said the poor fellow, "but it was your fault that I did so, for you took no care of my soul, but spent all your Sabbaths in jaunting abroad or in rioting at home; I might have learnt, but there was no one to teach me;

me; I might have followed a good example; but I saw only bad ones. I sinned against less light than you did." A drunken journeyman, who had spent all his wages on gin, took comfort that he had not spent a great estate in Bribery at Elections, as the Lord of his Manor had done, while a perjured Elector boasted that he was no drunkard, like the journeyman.

I have not room to describe the awful pomp of the Court, nor the terrible sounding of the trumpet which attended the Judge's entrance, nor the sitting of the Judge, nor the opening the books, nor the crowding of the millions, who stood before him. I shall pass over the multitudes who were tried and condemned to dungeons and chains, and fire, and to perpetual banishment from the presence of the King, which always seemed to be the saddest part of the sentence. I shall only notice further, a few who brought some plea of merit, and claimed a right to be rewarded by the King, and even deceived themselves so far as to think that his own book of laws would be their justification.

A thoughtless Spendthrift advanced without any contrition, and said, "that he had lived handsomely, and had hated the covetous whom God abhorreth, and that he trusted in that passage of the book, which said, that 'Covetousness was Idolatry;' and that he therefore hoped for a favorable sentence." Now it proved that this man had not only avoided Covetousness, but that he had even left his wife and children in want through his excessive prodigality

prodigality. The Judge therefore immediately pointed to that place in the Book where it is written, "he that provideth not for his household, is worse than an infidel." "He that liveth in pleasure is dead while he liveth;" "thou," said he, "in thy life-time, receivedst thy good things, and now thou must be tormented."—Then a Miser, whom hunger and hoarding had worn to skin and bone, crept forward, and praised the sentence passed on this extravagant youth, "and surely," said he, "since he is condemned, I am the man that may make some plea to favor—I was never idle or drunk, I kept my body in subjection. I have been so self-denying that I am certainly a Saint: I have loved neither father nor mother, nor wife, nor children to excess, in all this I have obeyed the book of the law.—Then the Judge said, "but where are thy works of mercy and thy labors of love? see that family which perished in thy fight last hard winter, while thy barns were overflowing; that poor family were my representatives, yet they were hungry, and thou gavest them no meat." "Go to now, thou rich man, weep and howl for the miseries that are come upon you. Your gold and your silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire."—Then came up one with a most self-sufficient air. He walked up boldly, having in one hand the plan of an Hospital which he had built, and in the other the drawing of a statue, which was erecting for him in the country that he had just left, and on his forehead appeared, in Gold Letters, the List of all the Public Charities to which he had subscribed. He seemed to take
great

great pleasure in the condemnation of the Miser, and said, "Lord, where saw I thee hungry and fed thee not, or in prison and visited thee not? I have visited the fatherless and widow in their affliction."—Here the Judge cut him short, by saying, "True, thou didst visit the fatherless, but didst thou fulfil equally that other part of my command "to keep thyself unspotted from the world." No, thou wert conformed to the world in many of its sinful customs, "thou didst follow a multitude to do evil;" "thou didst love the world and the things of the world;" and the motive to all thy charities was not a regard to me but to thy own credit with thy fellow men. Thou hast done every thing for the sake of reputation, and now thou art vainly trusting in thy works, instead of putting all thy trust in my Son, who has offered himself to be a surety for thee. Where has been that humility and gratitude to him which was required of thee. No, thou wouldst be thine own surety: thou hast trusted in thyself: thou hast made thy boast of thine own goodness; thou hast sought after and thou hast enjoyed the praise of men, and verily I say unto thee, "thou hast had thy reward."

A poor diseased blind cripple, from the very Hospital which this great man had built, then fell prostrate on his face, crying out, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner!" on which the Judge, to the surprize of all, said, "Well done, good and faithful servant." The poor man replied, "Lord, I have done nothing!"—"But thou hast *suffered well*" said the Judge; "thou hast been an example

of patience and meekness, and though thou hadst but few talents, yet thou hast well improved those few; thou hadst time, this thou didst spend in the humble duties of thy station, and also in earnest prayer, even for that proud Founder of thine Hospital, who never prayed for himself; thou wast indeed blind and lame, but it is no where said, my Son give me thy feet, or thine eyes, but *give me thy heart*; and even the faculties I did grant thee, were employed to my glory; with thine ears thou didst listen to my word, with thy tongue thou didst shew forth my praise, Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—There were several who came forward, and boasted of some single and particular virtue, in which they had been supposed to excel. One talked of his generosity, another of his courage, and a third of his fortitude; but it proved, on a close examination, that some of those supposed virtues were merely the effect of a particular constitution of body: that others proceeded from a false motive, and that not a few of them were actual vices, since they were carried to excess; and under the pretence of fulfilling one duty, some other duty was lost sight of; in short, these partial virtues were none of them done in obedience to the will of the King, but merely to please the person's own humour, and they would not, therefore, stand this day's trial, for "he that had kept the whole law, and yet had wilfully and habitually offended in any one point, was declared guilty of breaking the whole.

At this moment a sort of thick scales fell from the eyes of the multitude. They could now no longer

longer take comfort by measuring their neighbours' conduct against their own. Each at once saw himself in his true light, and found, alas! when it was too late, that he should have made the book which had been given him his rule of practice before, since it now proved to be the rule by which he was to be judged. Nay, every one now thought himself even worse than his neighbour, because, while he only *saw* and *heard* of the guilt of others, he *felt* his own in all its aggravated horrors.

To complete their confusion, they were compelled to acknowledge the justice of the Judge who condemned them; and also to approve the favorable sentence by which thousands of other criminals had not only their lives saved, but were made happy and glorious beyond all imagination, and all this was in consequence of their sincere repentance, and their humble acceptance of the pardon offered to them by the King's Son. One thing was remarkable, that whilst most of those who were condemned, never expected condemnation, but even claimed a reward for their supposed innocence or goodness, all who were really rewarded and forgiven were sensible that they owed every thing to a mere act of grace, and they cried out with one voice, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise!!!"

Z.

T H E E N D.

to give the comfort by meeting their neighbours
and to be first to give. And at once he said
it is his true pleasure to stand at the head of
the church that he might have the right of
the gift given him by the gift of the
church now provided to be the rule by which he
was to be guided. And he says now thought
that even words which his neighbours should
use to him and that of the gift of others
to him in all his gift of others.

The complete of the complete, they were com-
mitted to the knowledge of the justice of the judge
who continued to him, and also to approve the
of the complete by which thousands of other
men and women have their lives saved, but give
much more and glorious beyond all imagination.
And all this was in consequence of their first
of the complete, and their humble acceptance of the
of the complete. One of the King's son. One
of the complete, that will not of the
who were complete, never expected of the
of the complete, and reward for their faithful
of the complete, all who were faithful to
of the complete, they were
every thing to a man of peace, and they cried
out with one voice, "For unto us, not unto us
and unto thy name be the glory!!!"